



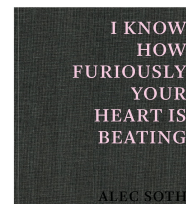
Alec Soth, "Nick, Los Angeles"

New photos of Alec Soth A little life

Illustration: Courtesy of the artist and Mack

Text: Anika Meier Date: 11.3.2019 **books**

For a while, Alec Soth did not portray any more people. For his new book, the US photographer has started again - and you can not get enough of his stories



The American Alec Soth, this is no exaggeration, has been one of the most important photographers worldwide for several years. The photo agency Magnum took him in 2008, his books were first published by Steidl Verlag, his exhibitions can be seen internationally in major museums and exhibition halls. Since you can ever get into a creative crisis.

Even photographers run the risk of ending up like the band Nickelback: with songs that all sound the same, because the hit formula is found and it is very pleasant to have one song after another on the radio. Who would like to repeat themselves?

And because Alec Soth is still doing that with his new photo book "I Know How Furiously Your Heart Is Beating", he feels compelled to justify it. His book "Sleeping by the Mississippi" hit in 2004 because he followed in the footsteps of Robert Frank and documented on a road trip along the Mississippi American life - subjectively, with a touch of poetry and melancholy. By comparison, he is afraid of coming along now boring. "Portraits and interiors on every journey: I realize how little that is exciting, it just is not sexy," he writes.

However, in the new book his storytelling proves to be just as excellent as his photos. The narrative framework is a conversation at the end of the book with the writer Hanyu Yanagihara - there could not have been a better choice when it comes to portraits of the lives of drawn people. With her second novel, the international bestseller "Eine wenig Leben" (2016), she overwhelms her readers with overflowing emotions. It is a novel about friendship and love, about despair that brings love and friendship when a person who is deeply hurt by those who are in charge will not let anyone in because he can not find words for their own feelings.

Alec Soth, meanwhile, is a man of emotions, never embarrassed to talk about insecurities and inadequacies. With Yanagihara he speaks openly about his creative crisis and its trigger. On a trip to Helsinki a few years ago, he meditated on the plane, came after a long walk sitting on a bench the knowledge - he calls it a mystical experience:

everything is connected with everything. That made him think. Until now, photography was about a sense of distance. But when everything is connected to everything, does not he increase the distance with his work?

Soth then stopped taking pictures of people. For a year he sat in his farmhouse, reading, looking into the light. He always wondered why he even took pictures of people and what they got from them. Only then did he travel again as before to make portraits again. And decided to allow encounters to happen and wait to see if anything happened, rather than assume that those being portrayed are doing something for him.

So far the storytelling. It has given a lot. Although the portrayed actually did not have much to do, except to let him with his camera in their apartments. It's like always with Soth: They sit, lie, stand in the middle of their lives and do not have to talk about their feelings, because he makes pictures of them. And it's like Yanagihara: The emotions are very loud. The portrayed people seem too lonely, too distant, too melancholy.

Yanagihara's novel "A Little Life" is sometimes so brutal that you as a reader can hardly bear the described pain and must put the book away. With Soth, on the other hand, you can not get enough of your feelings because his pictures are not told like their story.